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ABSTRACT

A study compared two approaches to teaching 38 grade 4 students in Canada to write trickster tales. By integrating understandings from cognitive and neo-Piagetian theory into instructional method, a novel approach to writing instruction was created. The compositions of children taught via this method were compared to those of students who experienced a more typical instructional approach. Although both methods incorporated aspects of a writing process approach, only instruction of the experimental group was deliberately structured to support developmentally-referenced growth in narrative ability. Gender effects were also examined and the interaction of genre with development discussed. Results indicated that trickster tales, as a genre, were appropriate in supporting narrative development of 8- to 10-year-olds, when coupled with developmentally-based instructional techniques. Appended are story plot charts and a trick sequence. (Contains 6 notes, 1 table, and 63 references.) (NKA)

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Teaching Trickster Tales: A Comparison of Instructional Approaches in Composition

Marya Jarvey & Anne McKeough
University of Calgary

Marya Jarvey
majarvey@ucalgary.ca
Anne McKeough
mckeough@ucalgary.ca
Division of Applied Psychology
University of Calgary
2500 University Drive NW
Calgary, Alberta Canada, T2N 1N4

Paper presented at the Annual General Meeting of the American Educational Research Association, Chicago, April 2003

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Teaching Trickster Tales

Marya Jarvey and Anne McKeough

University of Calgary

Language is arguably the most effective tool of power and influence in human society. Hence, education inherits a grave duty to teach children to use this tool skillfully, to understand its nuances, to hone its edges, and to wield it well. Yet there exists considerable confusion about how to carry off this responsibility. Longstanding and ongoing debates rage on about best methods for instruction in language arts. This paper intends to shed some fresh light upon that debate, in particular as it applies to the teaching of writing. The study described here compares two approaches to teaching grade four students to write trickster tales. By integrating understandings from cognitive and neo-Piagetian theory into instructional method, a novel approach to writing instruction was created. The compositions of children taught via this method were compared to those of students who experienced a more typical instructional approach. Although both methods incorporated aspects of a writing process approach, only instruction of the experimental group was deliberately structured to support developmentally-referenced growth in narrative ability. Gender effects were also examined, and the interaction of genre with development discussed.

Theoretical Framework

Storytelling is one of the most powerful means we as humans have to capture, interpret and share the experience of being. Bruner (1986, 1990) proposed that narrative is one of two fundamental modes of human thought. Not only do stories help us make meaning of our own experience, they allow us a glimpse into the inner lives of fellow human beings. Stories provide a

means of interpreting the intentions of others, in that they make more accessible the thoughts that lie behind the actions of protagonists, and the consequences that result (Polkinghorne, 1988). Through narrative we develop a deeper understanding of the social world, of how others think, why they behave the way they do, and the implications of individual actions for others.

Culture is intimately linked with narrative. Stories are one of the ways that cultures attribute meaning to life experiences, creating templates for behaviour and its interpretation. Bettelheim (1975) emphasized the important role literature plays for children, in transmitting the cultural heritage that promotes their ability to "...endow life in general with more meaning" (p.4). Stories are replete with lessons in how to behave in the social world (Bruner, 1986, 1991), and some, like certain trickster tales, invite the questioning of oppressive social mores and norms.

Trickster tales, chosen as the narrative genre for this study, comprise a particular type of folk tale that is found in virtually every continent around the globe (Huck, 1989). Many originate in oral storytelling traditions, but seem to regenerate in virtually never-ending incarnations across culture, continent and time (Edmonson, 1970). The tale of the trickster has been considered to be one of the oldest and most persistent of narrative forms (Babcock-Abrahams, 1975; Radin, 1956). Typically, though not always, tricksters take on animal forms such as spiders, coyotes, rabbits and ravens, yet the characteristics they represent are particularly human. Tricksters are cunning and inventive, often reprehensible and selfish, responsible for mischief and disruption as well as the occasional accidental creation of something useful to humanity (Babcock-Abrahams, 1975). Laughter and delight are typically part and parcel of a trickster tale. Too sly to be trapped in stories of ancient origin, tricksters are just as lively in today's narratives, appearing across many mediums, from operas to television sitcoms. Jung (1956) worded it well,

when he compared the figure of the trickster to "an old river-bed in which the water still flows" (p.201). Many trickster tales have been published as children's trade books (Young & Ferguson, 1995; Kraus, 1995), accommodating a range of reading levels and including tales originating in many cultures.

Typically, trickster tales have an underlying moral theme. On one hand, they function as story-tools for building core cultural values, in particular that of social responsibility (Lopez, 1977). They speak to the utopian desire to live freely without social constraints, but also reinforce the importance of rules for social behavior (Biallas, 1991). On the other hand, themes in trickster tales applaud human capacity for adaptability, resilience and ingenuity. That these tales accomplish such grand goals in a light-hearted, non-preachy, entertaining manner is a testament to enduring human creativity.

Trickster tales center on the theme of restoring balance, sometimes by restoring legitimate social mores, and sometimes by upsetting those that are oppressive. This tension between fair/unfair social boundaries, and individuals who attempt to override them, seems to form the driving force within a trickster tale. Tricksters, therefore, can be classified into two types: positive tricksters attempt to renegotiate social boundaries that are misaligned, obsolete or unjust; negative tricksters act in selfish ways to try to bypass rules and take more than their fair share. Positive tricksters are characters who are confronted by an improperly balanced social environment. They may be up against a powerful and oppressive enemy, unable to overpower it through physical means and thus must apply intelligence and cunning. Negative tricksters are typically greedy, selfish, thoughtless, disrespectful and conceited. They trample over the rights of others trying to get what they want. Typically, negative tricksters are initially successful, but eventually receive their just desserts.

A less overt teaching tucked inside trickster tales lies in what they convey about the power of language. Through language, tricksters deliberately cover up their true intentions. This deception plays a catalytic role in the plot structure of a trickster tale. Trickster tales represent a complication of the simpler problem-centered plot structures typical of fairy tales because tricksters *create* the story's impetus, usually by messing around with the way things are and causing problems for others. Furthermore, trickster tales complicate the notion of intent in narratives by focusing attention upon the interpretations (and misinterpretations) that other characters assign to a trickster's actions.

The major question of this study, how best to teach children to compose trickster tales, nests inside the larger one: How best can narrative development in children be fostered. In order to answer this question, it is helpful to understand how children come to develop, differentiate, and refine narrative thought. From infancy, development is propelled forward by dual forces. On the one hand, physiological maturation and growth occur that allows for the emergence of ever more capacity and complexity, enabling more sophisticated cognitive processing to unfurl (Atkinson & Shiffrin, 1968; Case, 1985, 1992; Fischer & Pipp, 1984; Klahr, 1992; Piaget, 1952, 1971). Study of the age-related differences in children's story compositions reveals something about how this cognitive maturation process unfolds in relation to narrative (Botvin & Sutton-Smith, 1977; Mandler & Goodman, 1982; McKeough, 1992; Nelson, 1981; Peterson & McCabe, 1983; Roth & Speckman, 1986; Stein, 1988; Sutton-Smith, 1981). On the other hand, social and cultural environments provide supports, models, and guidance in scaffolding and facilitating the development of expertise (Bronfenbrenner, 1979, 1989; Bruner, 1986; Dickenson & McCabe, 1991; Dickinson & Tabors, 2001; Gruendel, 1980; Heath, 1982; McCabe, 1996; Peterson & McCabe, 1983; Vygotsky, 1978).

Thus, children seem, on the one hand, to gradually internalize the cultural forms of narrative that are typical of their context, and on the other hand, to grow in their ability to apply those forms in increasingly more complex and coherent ways to their own compositions. The consistencies amongst these findings suggest that an underlying process of cognitive development may influence the trajectory of children's emerging abilities in narrative composition. If this is so, an understanding of the pattern of children's unfolding development in narrative composition should be useful in informing the instruction in writing that children receive in school.

A model for children's cognitive development has been proposed by neo-Piagetian theorist, Robbie Case (1985, 1992), in which narrative is seen as a central conceptual structure in the social domain. Case's model has served as the theoretical framework for several recent studies of narrative development and instruction in children and adolescents (Case, et al, 1996; Case, et al 1993; McKeough 1992, 1995; McKeough & Genereux, in press; McKeough, Davis, Forgeron, Marini, & Fung, 2002; McKeough & Sanderson 1996, McKeough, Sanderson, Martens, & Salter, 1996).

According to these investigations, it seems that children's narratives become more complex on at least two fronts as they age. On the one hand, children deepen their understanding and portrayal of characters as they grow. Young children begin by including characters who are simply instruments of an action script. As they develop, children include characters whose motivations and feelings drive action. By early adolescence, they integrate into stories characters whose actions are interpreted through reference to enduring traits and/or personal histories, and who demonstrate multiple, contrasting mental states. On the other hand, children are increasingly able to compose more complex and coherent plot structures. These two aspects of narrative

development dovetail together, as children's narratives progress from simple action scripts, to goal-driven sequences, to plots incorporating impediments to goals, through to stories of plight where characters struggle to interpret the meanings of their own and others' actions (McKeough et al, 1996. As described in Sun's (1998) study of narratives composed by fourth and fifth graders and those written by students in grade 10, 11 and 12, children move from composing stories with simple event-driven plot structures with 'happily ever after endings' at age 10 and 11, to compositions at age 15 to 17 that incorporate sophisticated plot structures integrating memory and reinterpretation of events in more realistic stories of human drama. In other words, children's narratives begin in Bruner's (1986) landscape of action and gradually cross over to his landscape of consciousness, where the characters' perceptions, feelings, and understandings of their world become central.

The focus of the current study involves the application of the developmental model proposed by Case (1985, 1992) and further developed by his colleagues (Case & McKeough, 1990; McKeough, 1995; McKeough & Sanderson, 1996; McKeough et al, 2002) to the instruction of 8- to 10-year-old children in composing trickster tales. Children at this age seem to be on the cusp of developing more coherent stories, where characters' intents, emotions and beliefs play a more commanding role in the plot (Bruner 1986; Feldman, C., Bruner, Kalmar, & Renderer, 1993; McKeough, 1992). Trickster tales, with their emphasis on character-driven plots and the interpretation of character intentions, seem the perfect genre in which to manage this maneuver.

Method

This research study examined the narrative development of grade 4 children receiving two instructional methods in writing trickster tales. The comparison group was instructed using a

modified writing-process approach and the experimental group was instructed using a developmental approach that focused on the structure and psychosocial content of the genre. Both groups received writing instruction for approximately 24 hours from teachers employed in the school and that conformed to mandated curriculum standards. Assessment measures included the scoring of three stories written by each participant prior to, during and approximately two months post instruction.

Participants

Participating in the study were grade 4 students enrolled in a publicly funded elementary school situated in a largely middle-class neighborhood of a large urban center in Western Canada. Forty-four students were eligible for participation. Ages of the 38 students[1] who volunteered for, and qualified for participation ranged from 8 years 9 months to 9 years 9 months (mean age 9 years, 2.5 months). Students were randomly assigned to one of the two treatment groups, each comprised of 19 students (8 girls and 11 boys in each). Verbal ability, as measured by the Vocabulary subtest of the Wechsler Intelligence Scale for Children-III (Weschler, 1991), ranged from Borderline to Very Superior, with a mean sub-test scaled score in the Average range (11.32, SD = 3.43).

Data sources

Wechsler Intelligence Scale for Children-III (WISC-III); Vocabulary Subtest. This test, considered to be a useful measure of a child's general intellectual ability and expressive vocabulary (Sattler, 1992), was individually administered prior to the start of instruction and scored in the standard fashion.

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[1] Three students did not return parental consent forms. Three additional students were disqualified from participation. Two of these had insufficient English language proficiency to fully participate in the study, and one student experienced an extended illness thereby missing many instructional sessions.

Story Prompt. Participants were asked to compose three stories involving trickster characters and tricks. One story was composed prior to instruction, one during instruction and one approximately two months after instruction ended. The initial story prompt allowed for a baseline to be established for each of the participants prior to instruction. Scores of stories written during instruction allowed for a measurement of growth in story writing ability as a result of teaching method. The third story, composed roughly two months after the instructional component ended, allowed for some measure of student retention of learning.

For those stories composed outside of the study's instructional block, the following writing prompt was given, "In the form of a story write about a character who tricks someone to get what he or she wants." The introduction of the prompt was followed by a short discussion about characters and what they might want. Stories written during instruction were products of procedures as described below.

Each story the children wrote was scored and rescored many times, and through this process the scoring criteria was tested and refined. The resulting scoring rubrics were built upon previous descriptions of student writing characteristics at various stages of development (McKeough, 1992), Furthermore, the rubric was designed to align with Case's general theory of development of central conceptual structures that constitute human thought (Case, 1985, 1992, Case et al, 1993, 1996).

As the researchers analyzed and reanalyzed the children's compositions, patterns and indications of writing maturity emerged. As this process proceeded, it became apparent that the stories should be scored in two main areas, plot structure and characterization, for two main reasons. First, the students' ages coincided with the point at which the theory suggested that a transition was expected to begin towards the inclusion of a larger and more complex role for

characters and their internal states. Second, the genre of trickster tales provides a schema in which characters play a larger role in the movement of the plot. Each of these two areas, plot structure and characterization, were described in some detail for each relevant developmental stage, as can be seen in the final scoring guides (Figures 1 and 2).[2]

Instruction Procedure

The instructional component of the research was divided into five blocks for both groups. During the first block of instruction, students remained in their homeroom classrooms, while one of the teachers came to deliver the same lessons to all. This block was devoted to building up general understandings of the genre of trickster tales, exposing the children to examples of the literature and discussing the nature of tricksters and their tricks. Students were divided into the two instructional groups at the start of the second block of lessons. This block involved additional exploration of the trickster tale genre, and an instructional focus on developing understandings of plot structure and character in narratives. The third instructional block involved students in planning their own trickster tale composition, followed by the fourth block of instruction dedicated to the drafting of their tales. The fifth block of instruction included the final publication and celebration of the children's writing. Although the topics of each block were the same for each group of students, and students had access to the same types of published trickster tales, the instructional emphasis differed for the two groups. The scheduling of each block was flexible, as children moved through the writing process at different rates. In addition, the two groups tended to complete these blocks at slightly different times, and interruptions such as school events and student or teacher absences required further adjustments.

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[2] Vocabulary, sentence structure, spelling, conventions of grammar, and punctuation were considered extraneous to the current study, because these elements were not addressed in any unique instructional way between the two groups. In addition, setting was not considered as a separate component for the purpose of story evaluation. Although setting does comprise an important element of narrative, it was not considered to be as informative as plot structure or characterisation in understanding students' writing development.

Children in the comparison group received instruction in Block 2 that included discussion of plot structures in terms of problems and solutions. Examples of story problems were discussed with the whole class, and options of happy and sad endings explained. A sample story problem was modeled, and potential happy and sad solutions brainstormed by the group. Students were then asked to generate three or four ideas for story problems on their own, providing possible happy and sad solutions for each. Characterization was discussed as well, with an emphasis on including details about character in story. Students completed several worksheets requiring them to write down aspects of a particular character, including his or her favourite things (colors, animals, foods, etc.), and details of his or her appearance (e.g. eye color, hair color, clothing, size, etc). During Block 3, students planned their trickster tales choosing an idea from amongst the story problems and solutions previously generated. They used a structured framework of word prompts, 'Introduction, First, Next, Then and Finally', to outline their story briefly in sentence format. Students were also asked to complete a web for their main character, which was to include the characters` name, what he or she looked like, his or her age, the things he or she liked to do, and what kind of person he or she was. Like a typical visual web, the main idea (in this case the character's name) was in the center of the page, and students added each attribute to a ray coming from the center. In Block 4, students composed their first draft of their story. They followed through the recursive stages of the writing process: drafting, conferencing with the teacher and peers, revising, and editing. Finally, in Block 5 students completed a final draft of their stories.

For children in the experimental group, instruction in Block 2 began with a discussion, along with examples, of the role of tension in story plot[3]. Events in sample trickster tales were

[3] The idea of tension was demonstrated in two ways. First, two children were asked to hold a blanket between them. One child was asked to tug the blanket a little bit towards her, followed by a second and third tug at which point she

plotted as sequential points along a story plot line, situated either above or below a central line of equilibrium (See Appendix 1). Students in this group also participated in articulating what characters in a story were thinking and saying, as they added words to character speech and thought bubbles. During Block 3, students first created a web for trickster of their story, and were asked to include his or her strengths, weaknesses, desires, fears and goals. They then plotted their own story events as points of tension either above or below an equilibrium line (see Appendix 2). Block 4 instructional time consisted of having students draw the characters involved in each trick sequence of their tale. Speech and thought bubbles to show what characters were saying and secretly thinking, were included, and story action briefly described underneath (See Appendix 3). During Block 5, excerpts of text from published trickster tales were discussed in terms of how the authors conveyed a character's inner thoughts. Students then referred to their drawings and diagrams as they composed a final version of their stories.

Scoring of Student Trickster Tales

Each of the three stories written by the students was scored according to the rubrics developed for plot structure and characterization. The students' story scores ranged from level 2 through to level 5.5 for both plot structure and characterisation. The two rubrics provided separate scores that often were aligned, but not always. That is, a student could obtain a different score for plot structure than for characterisation. In order to illustrate the application of the

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had almost all the blanket. The second child, told to be tolerant of the first two tugs, pulled the blanket back strongly after the third tug. This was compared to the building up of tension in a story, where one or two initial problems or injustices may be tolerated, but a third one becomes just too much, and a reaction occurs to resolve the problem. A second demonstration involved using a Jack-in-the-box windup toy, to show how the phrase repetitions resulted in growing anticipation of a reaction.

rubrics, examples of student stories[4] are provided below. A short explanation of scores follows each.[5]

Trickster Tale Exemplars

Exemplar 1.

Plot Structure: Level 3 *Characterisation: Level 3.*

The Escape of the T-Rex

Hi. I am Craig. I am short. I have black hair. I have black eyes and I love hockey. Here are my buddies, Shane and Rick. They're twins (blue eyes). They have brown hair, and they are also detectives. It all started when I heard from the Calgary hockey charging out my window and heading for the zoo. I stamped on my feet and called my buddies Shane and Rick. We shot to the zoo but we were too late. On a Sunday afternoon in Calgary Alberta on Coast Lane by the zoo. At night Craig sneaked out of his room and went to the zoo with his paralysers and his sleep powder. He goes in the zoo and hears people in the T-Rex's stomach.

The T-Rex wakes up and grabs Craig. "Please don't eat me, " said Craig.

"Why shouldn't I?"

"Because I will give you dino treats!"

"Dino treats! Where?" said the T-Rex.

"In this bag," said Craig. It was actually sleep powder.

The T-Rex grabbed the sleep powder and immediately fell asleep and dropped Craig and Craig ran away.

When the T-Rex wakes up he wants to eat Craig for sure. He finds Craig pretending to dance with an electronic T-Rex. It was so beautiful. The real T-Rex's eyes flashed. He ran, pushed Craig away and started to dance with the electronical T-Rex. Craig ran for it and got away and soon the T-Rex knew it was electronical.
Craig was playing hand hockey on ice with his friends Shane and Rick. During that hour Craig made a new friend named Brad. Craig made sure they didn't step where there was thin ice. Then the T-Rex came. Craig and his friends went around the thin ice but the T-Rex falls in the part where there was thin ice. He turned into an ice block. Brad tossed the hand hockey ball at the T-Rex's ice cube. He had perfect aim and the ball went through the ice and hit his stomach and the people from the zoo that got eaten fell out. Craig took the T-Rex to the zoo. And from that day on everybody came and looked at the T-Rex. Craig, Shane, Rick and Brad got a party and they live on within their lives.

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[4] The stories have been corrected for spelling and punctuation, as this was not part of the current investigation, and to allow for ease of understanding by the readers. In addition, the names of characters in some student stories were changed to protect the identity of their authors.

[5] No exemplars are included below level 3 as this score was rarely obtained, and those few stories scored here were not considered representative of these levels.

In this story the author used a sequence of three attempts to solve the original problem, that of a man-eating T-Rex. Two failed attempts were included, involving the pretence of dino treats and the lure of a dancing T-Rex that is actually "electronical." Each of these are inventive and original ideas for tricks. Although this story rated a level 3 for plot because of its series of complications, the sequences lack integration and cohesiveness. Episodes were weakly linked, and insufficient context is included to create rising tension. The story was brought to closure, and a sense of justice was restored as the heroes were rewarded and the T-Rex put back where it belonged. The story was also scored at level 3 for characterisation. The perspective of a second character was mentioned, and made explicit in the T-Rex's reactions to the dino treats and the electronic T-Rex. However, this perspective was not carried through to the end of the story. Although the story began with a physical description of Craig, his inner world was left undeveloped and his hidden motivations must be implied. The bulk of this narrative takes place in the "landscape of action."

Exemplar 2.

Plot Structure : Level 3.5 *Characterisation: Level 4*

The Shiny Sapphire

One rainy day in a Alberta swamp there was a leprechaun named Eric. He had a blue bowtie and a green suit and cowboy hat. He had soft brown eyes and blond hair and he had a collection of shiny stuff. He liked eating people food especially pizza! He had a pet frog named Croak which he liked to ride on. One day he was riding on Croak around the swamp to a large human house. He saw a dog door so with the help of Croak he pushed it open.

"Hello, anyone home?" Eric asked. He walked in a bit. "Croak." Croak bounded over "Can you bounce me up there. I think I see something. So Croak bounced him up. He saw a 8 year old girl he had to trick her into giving her ring to him, but how? Then he had a plan.

"Hello there."

"Oh hello," said the girl. "I'll make you a deal, you give me that ring and I'll give you a piece of gold. The girl thought for a moment. "It's a deal!" she said. She gave Eric the ring, he put it around Croak's neck then he gave a yellow bead then quickly jumped onto Croak's back. Croak jumped off the table, hopped through the dog door and

jumped into the pond before the girl realised a thing. Once she noticed she always locked the dog door. But she forgot about the window!

This story involved one well-planned, easy to understand trick sequence. Although sufficient detail was provided to follow the story without trouble, only one sequence was given, and no impediments confronted the leprechaun as he tried to trick the girl out of her ring. The story came to closure, and the girl's reaction in locking the dog door was an attempt to restore order (not quite successfully, as the window can still be breached). These characteristics gave this story a rating of 3.5 for plot. It was not scored at a higher level primarily because there was no more than one attempt to reach the goal.

This story was scored at level 4 for characterisation because it does make the inner world of the main character a little more lifelike. The leprechaun was said to like collecting shiny things. He boldly walked into a human house and planned to trick the girl. The reader knew of the leprechaun's true intentions when he asked the girl to trade her ring for gold, although not what form the trick will take. The author was somewhat successful in creating a more elaborate image of the character, even though some of these details added little to the story plot. The leprechaun fooled the girl using a generic trick, that of the false promise of gold, rather than manipulating any specific vulnerability. There was no attempt to explain why the leprechaun liked shiny things. Neither was there any commentary that reflected how the leprechaun's actions should be interpreted (as in being reprehensible or immoral).

Exemplar 3.

Plot Structure: Level 4 *Characterisation: Level 4*

One bright sunny school day, when all the kids in Calgary were getting ready for school, Kelly was talking to her little sister Megan. She was telling her about school. "You should go to school because it is really fun and you'll get candy," she said. "Your teacher will take you to the movie theatre." There was nothing stopping Megan now. She was off to grade one.

They ate their breakfast really fast and off they went. But school wasn't what Megan expected. They did five pages of Math, read a chapter in Social, answered thirty questions in Science. Then they had lunch. After lunch they did silent reading. Next they cleaned their desks and went home. "That was the most boring time of my life," thought Megan.

The next day Megan didn't want to go to school because she thought school was not fun at all. "We don't play any games", she complained. But Kelly said, "There's going to be treats." "What kind of treats?" asked Megan suspiciously. "I'm not sure…it's a surprise," said Kelly, with a giggle. So Megan went to school. She was excited about the surprise. But at 2:00 there still wasn't any treats. No cookies. No candy. No nothing. Just work. "This stinks," thought Megan. She scrunched up her nose and pouted.

But the next day, Kelly and Megan were arguing about going to school. "You should go to school," said Colleen. "Why?" said Megan with a really mad look on her face. Her face was really red, and getting redder by the minute. Finally Kelly said, "I will call the truant officer." "What's a truant officer?" said Megan. "A truant officer checks up on kids who are missing school." Really?" said Megan. "Let's go to school right now". "OK. Let's go," said Kelly.

Again, school was very boring. "I wish we didn't have to go to school," grumbled Megan. "We read two 18 paged stories until lunch. Then we did writing practice until the bell. This is so boring. I need to make myself an adventure. Maybe I will make up a short cut home," thought Megan. Megan got great joy. She was having a ball making up a short cut. But after awhile it wasn't that much fun. She was lost. "Oh no!" Luckily there was a phone booth a few metres away. Megan ran to the phone booth. She looked up the number for the school. Finally at the school the secretary answered. "I'll be right over," said Mrs. Howard the secretary.

Megan learned that going to school can help you, and sometimes it can even save your life.

In this story, Kelly tried three times to get Megan to go to school. Although her tricks succeeded, they caused a new problem when Megan decided to alleviate her boredom by creating an adventure of her own and subsequently got lost. The ending sequence of this story introduced a new twist that linked the story back to the initial problem. This novel linkage nested the three attempts within a larger story, integrating the whole story and making it more cohesive. It was not scored higher because the tricks themselves are not qualitatively different from one another.

The story was also scored at level 4 for characterisation. There was an explicit inclusion of the goals of two contrasting characters. The main character was consistent and believable in her actions, thoughts and speech. Although there was little insight given into the second character's perspectives, Kelly was shown to understand Megan's motivations (for candy, movies, treats). The interaction between Megan's and Kelly's desires added to the tension of the story, and gave it richer social/psychological content.

Exemplar 4.

Plot Structure: Level 4.5 *Characterisation: Level 4.5*

Catherine and Her Homework

One sunny Monday afternoon, the children in Mr. Jones' classroom were getting their homework ready to take home. They all felt a chill of excitement running from head to toe. They all loved homework. All except Catherine. Catherine hated to do homework. Then, DING-DING-DING. All the children rushed out.

On her way home Catherine saw Lauren walking. She came up to her and said, in a very fake sick sounding voice, "Hey Lauren. You know the homework we got? Well, I don't feel too well. Will you do my homework for me just this once?"

"OK," said Lauren, "This once only because that's cheating. "

"Oh ya," said Catherine.

So Lauren went over to Catherine's house and did her homework. Catherine went to bed with a gleam of happiness in her eyes.

The next day she gave her homework to Mr. Jones. Mr. Jones said, "Oh Catherine, I am very proud. This is A work. "

"Oh, thank you, Mr. Jones," Catherine said with a feeling of guilt inside.

After school she had a little math page that they went over in school. Still Catherine didn't like it, even that small page. So she went up to Tyler on the way home from school. She said with hidden excitement, "Tyler, I didn't understand the math today. Will you come help me? Show me how to do it."

"Oh sure, " said Tyler, "What are friends for?" Well Tyler went to Catherine's house and he showed her one after another. She still said she didn't understand until the whole page was done. Tyler was as annoyed as you get when your sister copies you all day. He said bye to Catherine and left. Catherine was so happy. She thought, "That was such a success I'll try it again."

The next morning she handed her math in and Mr. Jones said, "Oh Catherine, this is also A work." Still Catherine felt an unusual feeling.

Mr. Jones said, sorry but he had one more homework sheet on comprehension. On the way home Catherine saw Beth-Anne. She said, "Hey Beth-Anne. I have a dance recital tonight. Will you do my homework for me?"

"I'm in the same dance class as you. There is no recital. So no way am I doing your homework."

The next day at school Catherine was handing in her homework. A shot of fear went through her because she saw Tyler, Beth-Anne and Lauren talking. Well, they were talking about tricking her back. They got homework that afternoon and on the way home they said, "We don't understand our homework."

Catherine said, "You understood it when I tricked you to do mine, ooops…I wasn't supposed…"

"Ah ha!" they said, "We thought you were acting weird. Well, now you know how it feels."

"Yes I do," said Catherine. "From now on I will do my own homework."

"Right," said her friends.

From then on Catherine did her homework herself.

In this story, scored for plot at 4.5, there was a clear sense of coherence and advance planning. In addition, each of the series of tricks in the series are unique. The characters Catherine attempted to manipulate were not completely gullible. The events were well-linked, and the ending of the story used a novel twist and a trick in return to address the major breach of the story, that of Catherine's reluctance to accept her social responsibility (doing her homework). A score of 5 was not achieved because the ending was quite abrupt, and Catherine's complete reform seemed somewhat unrealistic.

The story was also scored at 4.5 for characterisation. Catherine's character was fleshed out with details that made her more lifelike, such as the "gleam of happiness in her eyes", her use of "…a very fake, sick-sounding voice", her "hidden excitement", and a "…feeling of guilt inside." The story was propelled forward by Catherine's interior qualities. Her true thoughts were made clear to the reader yet kept hidden from other characters in the story. The perspectives of the other characters were included, and some description of their thoughts and feelings made them seem more realistic as well. The story did not reach a score of 5 because specific vulnerabilities were not used in tricks, motivations for shirking homework were not included, and the main character underwent a radical and easy reformation.

Exemplar 5.

Plot Structure: Level 5 *Characterisation: Level 5*

One stormy, misty night, back when all creatures could talk, all the bats in Wall Haven were going in and out, franticly calling names, - all but Shadow with his mirror-smooth wings and slick fur and sharp eyes – well, he was listening…

"Carl!" – a new name. "Blast! That's the third one today!" he shouted, cursing himself for not acting sooner. "It's for sure it was that impulsive, dim-witted fool, that idiotic no-brain maniac! That Mr. Has-to-rule-the world-cup-face! Arggghhh! Don! You think you can go around kidnapping bats and sucking out their life force and get away with it? No way! Not while I'm around! You're in deep doggie do-do! " he shouted impulsively, all the way to Don's cave.

Now, Shadow had something I call "thinking off the pulse", meaning that he's slightly smarter than most people- in this case, bats- in trickery…no, it doesn't mean he thought better when his heart did not beat. It simply meant that he was slightly trickier and able to think faster.

By now, Shadow was calm. Why? He was thinking off the pulse. Shadow in no time at all was sneaking into Don's cave, and finding a perch. Shadow waited for Don to appear… and waited…and waited. "Heck," Shadow muttered impatiently. Don's sudden appearance out of the shadows at the back of the cave into the light was so surprising that Shadow shouted without thinking, "Ghagh! Look!" Don, on the other hand, thought Shadow was talking to him. So, Don looked. Of course, you know what he saw – nothing! Taking advantage of Don's confusion, Shadow zipped to the back of Don's cave before you could say "Zipperwinkle". Finding the three bats – Shadow was only able to carry one of the unconscious bats at a time – Shadow picked one out and raced out the back entrance. Next thing you know, Don was penetrating your ears with shouts of "You little nerd!" However, Shadow was already in Wall Haven, putting the bat down at the entrance. He yelled, "Hey! Here's one!" The bat's mother rushed to the entrance, picked up her missing bat, and put him in bed.

Meanwhile, Shadow was already concocting his next trick, by broiling something hot and darn yucky. Shadow shrivelled his nose. He wondered many things though. What will Don try on him if he failed? Why did Don want to rule the world with the power of the bats? How could Don still live at the age of 672 years? Shadow did not, and probably never would know these answers. "Whoa!" He shuddered, pulling a back flip to avoid a wall of rock. Now entering Don's cave, he dropped what he was carrying. PLOP! Shadow hid.

Don finally came by. "Sniff…sniff… what is that smell? Looks like that smell's coming from this nice loaf of my mom's bread. Wonder how it got here? Hmmm…I just can't resist a bite," Shadow heard him say. Don reached for the loaf. As soon as he took a bite, well, almost a bite, he yelped, ran out to the front entrance and was gone. Several moments later, there was a tremendous gulping from the river, and a voice from Don's cave. "How'd ya like the mustard bread?" Another few moments and Shadow was off with his second bat. When he got to Wall Haven, he set the bat down and said, "Here's another". The bat's mother came rushing up, took him in her wings, and zipped off to put him in bed

The next day, Shadow zipped off again, with something in his talons, and a strange sheen on his fur. Shadow struggled with the weight. It isn't easy to carry metal with a slick coat of liquid on yourself. Shadow still had about a quarter of a mile to fly. Still wondering many things, trying to fly fast, Shadow sped on. He had little hope for success. He was sure that Don would cut him off from entering his cave.

WHAM! This time Shadow had flown straight into a sharp curve, upwards in the mountain. "Ow. I do admit that did hurt." Shadow said in such a way I cannot describe. "Huh? What the…?" Shadow muttered. He didn't remember these surroundings. He was getting scared. Then it happened. Shadow thought he saw a face in the grass. He took a step back. Big mistake. Tumbling down a slide of pillows might be fun, but a giant lump of granite? Absolutely not.

Shadow sputtered out dirt. He looked around and saw that Don's cave was just overhead, however. Shadow ached from snout to talons. All the same, Shadow poured his energy into stumbling through the mouth of the cavern.

Shadow thought that he looked like a dope. The trick metal arrow he was carrying looked like a cloven twig that was stuck through him. It was supposed to look like an arrow went right through his body, but it really went around his middle. He wanted Don to see him and think that he was dead. Then Don would go forage for food, and Shadow would get the last bat. Shadow smelled the musty air. Shadow sighed. Shadow was drowsy. He may have dozed off once or twice, but soon enough, Don burst through the mouth of the cavern.

Don stared into space. Don didn't even notice Shadow. Shadow's nose tickled. Time passed. Hours, maybe. Don didn't move. Shadow's nose itched, and soon it ached. He had to sneeze, but it would give him away. He wasn't going to, no, he wouldn't. "Wachoo" Shadow sneezed! Don spun around, clutched Shadow and roared with laughter.

Shadow was squirming like a worm. Squeak! Out slipped Shadow from Don's grasp. Shadow caught balance and zipped around Don again and again. Finally, as Shadow's last thoughts faded, the ones about how spreading lard on his fur had been such a great backup, Don fell over from dizziness. As Shadow flew to the back of the cavern to get the third bat, his wonders disintegrated. It was all over. He had victory!

Shadow was home. The all too large cries of the bats had stopped, and everything eventually returned to normal. Well, almost. Other than the noise of the party.

In this story, scored at level 5 for plot, a sequence of three tricks nested within the larger problem of dealing with a powerful oppressor. The sequences were well linked, and the tricks were each imaginative. There was some manipulation of Don's specific vulnerabilities, in the mustard – laced bread made to look like the bread his mother made. The main character, a positive trickster, was not perfect, but fumbled and fell in his attempts. There was an attempt to include an element of humour in his inadequacies. Tension was created, particularly in the final

trick with the growing threat of an impending sneeze. The ending involved a fresh twist, a trick within a trick. Closure was obtained, although there was some suggestion that Don was not defeated for good.

The story was also scored at level 5 for characterisation. The main character's contrasting traits made him more realistic. In addition, rich detail about his inner thoughts, appearance, actions and speech helped to create a more realistic character. Although there was some detail about the second character's perspective, this was much more limited. Overall, however, the rich detail included in this story supports the creation of more believable characters. Some confusion does persist, despite the elaborate detail, and this seems to stem primarily from gaps in linking the author's viewpoint with that of the reader.

Exemplar 6.

Plot Structure: Level 5.5 *Characterisation: Level 5.5*

One bright summer's day a monkey was hurrying through the rushes. A jaguar followed behind him, fangs glistening in the sunlight. Mikim the monkey had dark grey fur and bright yellow eyes, a high voice and his pride: his clever mind that got him out of many a situation. This was a dense rain forest in South Africa yet he knew where he was. Jinta the dim-witted jaguar was not so clever, but desperately wanted to get back at Mikim for playing tricks on him.

Mikim was fast but Jinta was too. Mikim didn't know how much longer he could keep it up.

"HEEHEEHEE can't catch me!" taunted Mikim.

"Shut up," Jinta replied, panting with tiredness. "I'll cut him off at the next clearing," thought Jinta while he was turning left.

"HEHE he's going to try and cut me off so I'll turn right," Mikim thought turning right.

"GOTCHA!" Jinta cried, clutching a tree stump. Jinta took a huge bite out of it. "Pupupu," he spat.

"HEEHEE that's not me!" rang out a voice from in a denser part of the rain forest.

"Mikim a stupid prank can't stop me!" Jinta yelled with all the dignity he had.

Mikim burst into laughter, "HEEHEEHEE one more will"As Mikim went home he saw Jinta planning his next move. Mikim laughed yet even more, thinking of the mouthful of bark Jinta had. Mikim swung home.

Jinta sat thinking about how he could catch Mikim. He came across the idea of using bait, so he thought about what Mikim liked most. "NOCANUTA!" he yelled. A

nocanuta is like a coconut with green fur and chocolate meat and milk inside. It was Mikim's absolute favourite food. He would trap Mikim in a cave with the Nocanuta for bait. Then Jinta fell asleep dreaming of all the glory he would have if he caught Mikim…

Mikim saw Jinta snoring in his sleep. "HEEHEEHEE this looks like a perfect opportunity to have some fun with Jinta," he thought. He tried to wake Jinta by throwing a stick at him, but it had no effect whatsoever. So he tried using a rock, but it worked no better. Now he got angry, so he gave Jinta a great kick. POW! Jinta woke on the wrong side of the bed, roaring. He caught a glimpse of a dark grey tail snaking its way through the bushes. He came to the conclusion Mikim kicked him. "You're dead!" he bellowed.

Jinta went to find a Nocanuta. He came across a clearing. Mikim saw him and stood perfectly still. When danger approached Mikim started to think. Once he thought of something he went off to do it. This was one of those times. Mikim went off to find an orange tree.

Two days later Jinta returned with a nocanuta on his back, strapped with vines. Mikim was up in an orange tree, holding a big ripe juicy orange in his hands. He saw Jinta and in his surprise he accidentally dropped the orange. On its way down it knocked 27 more oranges with it. They all fell on Jinta, soaking him to the bone with sticky orange liquid that made his hair stand up on the end. Jinta left to wash it off. "HOOHOOHOOHEEEHEE He's now an oranguar. HEHEHEEEHEE" giggled Mikim.

Jinta prowled yelling, "Mikim, Mikim. Just you wait!" Mikim saw this and said in his head, "HA. He thinks I can't see it's a trap. Then again it is a nocanuta and I do love nocanuta" He thought he would make a trap too. He needed:

20 x wood,
1 x vine,
1 x stone knife,
1 x bowl,
1 x wooden spring,
1 L water,
2 x rocks,
1 x plate of moss.

He made the wood into a cage. He hooked it to the vine with the spring, put water on a rock and put the moss over it, set a knife to cut the vine and the bowl to catch the nocanuta when it was pulled off Jinta's back. Then he ran to find Jinta.

When he found Jinta, he mocked, "You silly bum. Betcha can't catch me," and leapt into the bushes. Jinta followed not thinking that Mikim might be trying to trick him. Mikim ran as fast as his legs could take him. Just then Mikim stumbled. Jinta stopped….OR TRIED. Jinta fell into the trap. "NOOOOO!" "HEEHEEHE" Slash! Bang! POW! Jinta was caught. The nocanuta landed in the bowl. "NOOOO! Let me out," said Jinta, rattling the wooden bars.

"NOO! MINE!" shouted Mikim. He grabbed the nocanuta, and walked absent mindedly away. Then he tripped over the rock he used to make the trap. The nocanuta rolled off into the water. "NOOO!" Mikim moaned. Mikim left to get a forked stick.

A giant egg-eating snake came along, and thinking the nocanuta was an egg, ate it. "NOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOO!" screamed Mikim. "You ate my nocanuta!" "Oh. It was yours? Oh well. How about a regurgitated egg shell?" asked the snake.

"NO!"

Mikim left, walking to the cage. He said to Jinta, "I'll let you out after you do 2000 pages of my homework." 72 days later, he set Jinta free.
Jinta never tried tricking Mikim again. He knew the consequences. But Mikim never stopped his tricks, and he's still tricking to this very day.

The point that discriminates a story at the level 5.5 from level 5 lies in the creation of two characters, each of whom are lifelike, who use their knowledge of the other's vulnerabilities in tricks. They each attempt to trick the other, and the plot revolves around these opposing goals, intents and interpretations. The story above describes two unique opposing characters, Mikim the monkey and Jinta the jaguar, attempting to outwit the other. Each has contrasting traits. Jinta, despite his glistening fangs and speed, is "dim-witted". Mikim, for all his cleverness, trips on his own trap and loses his prized nocanuta. The ending includes a humorous ironic twist, as Mikim loses the object he has just worked so hard to obtain. The complications in the story involve the interaction between two characters, and although played out in the world of action, this is driven by the interior beliefs and desires of the characters. The characters' rivalry fuels the story action. They attempt to guess what the other is thinking and planning, more or less successfully. Jinta seems to have learned his lesson, but Mikim the monkey is incorrigible and rather than give up on tricks, continues them "...to this very day."[6]

As can be seen from the above sample story analyses, there was a considerable range of complexity in plot and characterisation development across participants and over the course of the study. Statistical analysis of participants' story performance before, during and after instruction in terms of developmental and gender differences are reported in what follows.

[6] In fact, the author of this story was so interested in his characters' interplay that he continued to write about their ongoing adventures. At least two more sequels were composed.

Results

To assess the reliability of the scoring rubrics, a random sample of 10% of the story compositions were scored independently by a second rater. Identical scores were assigned to 79% of the stories, and 92% fell within .5. Cronbach's Alpha was .8635, indicating acceptable reliability.

To test for the differences between the two instruction groups across time, MANOVAs were performed on plot structure and characterization scores and follow-up simple effect tests were run as appropriate. Mean scores and standard deviations are presented in Table 1.

Table 1. Trickster Tale Mean Scores (and standard deviations) by Group over Time

Time	Plot Structure Scores		Characterization Scores	
	Comparison	Experimental	Comparison	Experimental
Before Instruction	3.421 (.534)	3.395 (.542)	3.500 (.645)	3.421 (.750)
During Instruction	3.474 (.697)	4.342 (.625)	3.553 (.724)	4.395 (.542)
After Instruction	3.342 (.783)	4.158 (.746)	3.368 (.779)	4.395 (.718)

On the plot structure measure, a significant group by time interaction effect was found [$F(2, 72) = 11.19$, $p < 001$]. On the average, there were significant time and instructional group effects [$F(2,72) = 11.60$, $p < .001$ and $F(1,36) = 9.85$, $p = .003$, respectively]. Simple effects testing revealed a significant time effect for the experimental group [$F(2,72) = 22.39$, $p < 001$] but not for the comparison group. A significant group effects was found for plot structure on stories written during [$F(1,36) = 16.36$, $p < 001$] and following instruction [$F(1,36) = 10.81$, $p =$

.002], but not for those written before instruction. Finally, simple effects testing with MANOVA showed no significant difference between stories written during and after instruction.

In the analysis of characterisation a similar pattern was found. A significant group by time interaction effect emerged [F (2, 72) = 12.10, $p < .001$]. On the average, a significant time [F (2, 72) = 10.33, $p < .001$] and group effects were found [F (1,36) = 11.14, $p = .002$]. Simple effects testing showed a significant time effect for the experimental group [F (2,72) = 21.82, $p < .001$] but none for the comparison group. Analyses of pre-instruction stories revealed no significant group effect, however, a significant group effect was evident for stories written during instruction [F(1,36) = 16.46, $p < .001$] and following instruction [F (1,36) = 17.82, $p < .001$]. During-instruction and post-instruction characterization scores did not differ significantly.

Similar statistical procedures were applied to test for gender differences. As already indicated, significant time effects were evident for both plot structure and characterization [F (2,72) = 8.66, $p < .001$ and F (2,72) = 6.84, $p = .002$, respectively], but no significant gender or gender by time interaction effects were noted.

The overall mean scores of stories written before instruction were commensurate with that predicted by Case's (1985, 1992) theory (plot = 3.41 and characterization = 3.46), placing participants between the bifocal coordination and integrated bifocal substage of Case's dimensional stage (Case, 1985). Although the two groups' story scores for plot structure and characterization did not significantly differ on the original pre-instruction stories, the experimental group outperformed the comparison group on stories completed during instruction and after instruction ended. Notably, the gains made by experimental group during instruction were not lost two months after instruction, suggesting that the conceptual advance was at least

somewhat stable. Taken together, these results support the application of Case's developmental model (1985, 1992) to instruction in narrative composition.

Conclusions and Educational and Scientific Importance

The current study provided several new insights into narrative development. In particular, it explored the relationship between instruction in a distinct genre and narrative development at a particular age and grade level. Findings suggested that trickster tales, as a genre, were appropriate in supporting narrative development of 8- to 10-year-olds, when coupled with developmentally-based instruction techniques. Instruction between the two groups differed in several key ways. The following descriptions summarize these major dissimilarities, in terms of how developmentally–referenced instruction in which experimental group children participated was distinguished from the more typical writing instruction received by the comparison group.

Key differences in instructional approaches

1.) The engine, or central organizing feature, given for the story differed.

In the comparison group instruction, an emphasis was placed upon the use of a problem as the central organizing feature of the story. Students were encouraged to identify a problem and a solution for their story before beginning to write. Probably owing to this problem-solution schema, the students in the comparison group tended to write trickster tales in which a positive trickster character solved a problem that occurred unintentionally. For instance, six of the stories comparison children wrote during instruction centered on creatures that had escaped from their enclosures. Most of these students used positive tricksters, even though they had received the same earlier exposure to tricksters of both types as the experimental group. Specifically, 17 out of 19 students in the comparison group wrote stories during instruction with positive tricksters, and 13 out of 19 used positive tricksters in their post-instruction stories. Thus, a plot featuring a

positive trickster seemed to be evoked by the problem-oriented story frame suggested by instruction given by the teacher of the comparison group.

During instruction received by the experimental group, emphasis was placed upon first inventing a negative character who was responsible for *creating* the problem in the story. This shifted the engine of the story from an *unintentional* problem to an *intentional* problem, making character central to the forward movement of the story. On the stories written during instruction, 10 out of 19 students in this group used negative tricksters, while on the post instruction story, 12 out of 19 students featured negative tricksters. The use of a negative trickster seemed to coincide with a more important role being given to character in the plot structure.

2) The organizational framework emphasized in instruction differed.

In the comparison group, students were instructed to organize their stories according to the framework: Introduction, First, Then, Next and Finally. This linear framework was intended to assist them in sequencing events, and in extending their stories to include failed attempts and story complications. However, it may not have encouraged them to design these episodes with an overall purpose or theme in mind. As a plot structure involving a series of complications or failed attempts is typical of narrative development at age eight, the organizational framework provided for this group may have done little to scaffold more mature narratives (McKeough, 1992; McKeough et al, 1996).

In the experimental group, instruction was directed towards the idea of tension in a story. This idea was extended during the student's plotting of story events on either the positive or negative side of a central axis that represented a just balance. This graphic organizer thus included a spatial dimension. Students not only planned a linear sequence of events, but attempted to structure events in terms of degree of emotional tension. Accompanied with this

cognitive scaffold, the instructional emphasis placed upon creating tension and restoring balance in story planning may have assisted students in managing the move to a higher level of plot structure. Level 4 stories nested a series of attempts and/or complications within an overarching story, or what Case et al (1993) called, "...a story within a story " (p.103) and often achieved resolution with an interesting twist. The notion of tension being relieved by a novel reaction may have supported this higher-level story structure. For example, stories at this level often had a second character play a trick in return on the negative trickster.

3.) The outer world versus the inner world of characters was differentially emphasized.

Students in the comparison group were encouraged to include a description of their characters' appearance in their tales. Their pre-writing work on character focused on surface level attributes, such as favorite colors, foods, activities and their general appearance. In their stories, students included character descriptions such as, "May liked flowers, fashion, she was quiet, smart, funny, brave, and she was also ten years old," or "Tanya had brown hair and blue eyes and Kaitlyn had black hair and blue eyes. They liked to skate and were good dancers." However, these descriptions tended to have very little to do with the purpose of the story. They did not lend support to the creation of a concept in the reader's mind as to the personality of the characters and how this would make a difference in what happened in the story. Although instruction provided this group might have drawn attention towards character, it did not help students integrate this with the story's overall purpose, and no significant gains in narrative development occurred.

Instruction in the experimental group approached character in a different way. Although both groups used character webs, only the experimental group was asked to include characters' strengths, weaknesses, desires and fears. This focussed more attention on interior aspects of

character. More importantly, students in the experimental group used both speech and thought bubbles to accompany drawings, showing what characters were saying, thinking and feeling. No teacher direction instructed students to include appearance as such, although some discussion centered on making characters' names and appearance fit their personalities. On the whole, this group was encouraged to include details that reflected the inner world of their characters. When children embarked upon the process of converting their characters' thought bubbles into written text, a problem emerged for them. They were not sure how to manage this. In response, the instructor shared excerpts from writers of published trickster tales, demonstrating how they were able to convey hidden feelings and thoughts in narrative text. Thus, a problem that students encountered in their writing reconnected them with the published literature, as they began to read it with a writer's eye.

Students' stories reflected an emphasis upon the inner world of their characters. For example, lines such as "She wasn't about to give up…" and "Dylan didn't want to look suspicious, so he just took the money, put it in his pocket, and went on a little walk outside" indicate that these writers were putting characters' feelings, hidden desires and pretence into words. Many stories included numerous instances where characters' inner thoughts, feelings and/or intentions were made clear to readers, but remained concealed from other characters in the stories. For example, consider the following excerpts from a number of different stories written by experimental group children. In them, not only is the inner landscape of the character made apparent to the reader, but the writer also sculpted the writing in such a way as to indicate that a different impression of reality was given to another character.

> " 'A…your king has ordered me to…a…mop the floors. Ya that's it. I'm here to mop the floors," stuttered Toto. "Hee hee hee, I'm so clever," he thought to himself"

" 'Hmmm. Will she catch on to me? thought Zeze."

" 'Hey, I see what you're trying to do but it's not going to work.' "

"He wanted to be the top creature in the jungle, but in his head he was really afraid of them standing up to him."

"Porcupine knew what Wolverine was going to do. Porcupine said, 'Oh, I'd love to go for a walk, but I'm busy.'"

"But he didn't sound sorry at all."

" 'There,' she said, pretending to be relieved."

" 'I know,' she thought, 'I'm going to ask Dad. He always says yes.'"

"He thought he was the only one who knew the trick."

"He gave it [the fake money] to Dr. Evil and said with a smile, 'Here's your money.' Dr Evil replied, squinting, 'Is it real?' 'Yes,' said Igy, trying to hold in his smile."

In addition, some students described a character's appearance in a way that contributed to the purpose of the story. In the following example, the writer created a story about a fox named Copper who repeatedly tricked other characters into giving him money. In the following excerpt from the beginning of her story, the author creates not just a visual image of her character, but shapes this to support the impression she wants him to make on her readers, setting them up for the story action that follows:

Copper looked at the sign on the clean glass window. It said: Everything purchased is $5.00 or over. Copper looked at the money in his dirty matted hand. He only had $3.50. "No," he said suspiciously, "I must have more than that!" He dug though his patched and holey pocket of his dirty and also patched brown cotton pants. He checked his filthy shirt pocket which was sewn onto his blue wool shirt. But all he pulled out were two buttons, a chocolate bar wrapper (which he had stolen and eaten) and a piece of string. "I'll just have to steal," he said like he had done it a million times. "Here goes." He pulled his yellow and green, filthy and ripped checked tie from left to right, then tightened it. He pulled

> down his old folks hat with the knob on the top tight over his head, and without hesitation walked right into the beautiful store: Chocolate for the Soul.

Overall, it appeared that the differences found between group scores on the characterisation measure were influenced by the dissimilar approaches to instruction involving character. Emphasis in the experimental instruction upon the inner world of the characters, and the relationship of character to the creation of the story's problem or breach, appeared to support narrative development for the students in this group.

Additional observations

That no significant gender by time interaction or gender effects were found is of interest, as research findings seem often supportive of gender differences in narrative composition (e.g., Applebee, 1978; Applebee, Langer, Jenkins, Mullis, & Foertsch, 1990; Engelhard, Gordon, & Gabrielson, 1991; Genereux, 1998; Hyde, 1998; Purves, 1978). However, research in the area of gender differences in writing is not conclusive. The current study raises the following question: Does genre interact with gender in some unique ways? Anecdotal evidence indicated that the boys in the current study seemed generally to enjoy the trickster tale genre. Not only did they relish the wit and humor found in the published trickster tales, they seemed particularly intrigued with plotting out tricks that one character could use to fool another. Further investigation of ways that gender might interact with genre is surely warranted.

Experimental group instruction made use of visual scaffolds in supporting children's narrative development, both in terms of spatial plot outlines and drawings of characters with speech and thought bubbles. This study supports the use of such cross-modal supports in narrative instruction. Not only do they encourage children to draw upon multiple forms of mental representation, use of such scaffolds in the present study may have reduced the amount of actual writing required of students in the planning and drafting stages. For students at age eight to ten,

the process of completing written text can still present significant physical labor. Story planning that utilizes visual scaffolds can result in higher quality narratives, even as it eliminates some of the burden of recopying drafts. Multimodal scaffolding may therefore create not just a cognitive scaffold assisting children in bridging narrative development to a new level, but one that supports children with the physical demands of writing as well.

Trickster tales have a distinct social and moral dimension. Perhaps it is not surprising then that during the course of this study it became increasingly apparent to the researchers that children's understanding of story was neighbor to their understanding of social and moral realms. Piaget (1932) and others (Kohlberg, 1963, 1969; Kohlberg & Blatt, 1972; Turiel, 1969) have pointed to a relationship between cognitive development and growth in children's moral judgment, and Selman (1971, 1976, 1980) described specific developmental stages of social cognition. Of particular pertinence here is Selman's suggestion that children develop increasingly more sophisticated abilities in social perspective-taking from early childhood to adolescence. Ability to incorporate more than a single perspective into a story was found to be one of the developmental markers for level of narrative maturity in the current study. These parallels suggest a new angle through which children's story writing may be investigated. Perhaps narrative writing analysis can serve as a means to better understand stages of children's social cognition, and to better support their development. Just as Polkinghorne (1988) described, stories provide a means of interpreting the intentions of others, leading to deeper understandings of one's social world.

Educators are commissioned with teaching literacy, and this cannot be separated from addressing what it means to be human, and to belong to a human community. Tricksterism seems to be intrinsically tied up with both. On the one hand it caricatures the selfish desire of homo

sapiens to get more than our fair share through misrepresenting the truth. On the other hand, it symbolizes our devilish and irrepressible talent to wiggle our way around structures of power that attempt to imprison the human spirit. It makes sense to address this human trait through an explicit study of the trickster tale genre at the age at which children are developmentally ready to be interested in and to begin to reckon with it.

Learning to be literate is at heart learning about life. It means learning about oneself as a human being in relationship with others in the human community. Our instruction in literacy needs to be formed with this at its core. It is simply not enough to teach extracted elements of narrative, such as grammar or story structure, nor to pull completely apart the reading of stories from the writing of them. It is also inadequate to expect all children to understand narratives and be competent at their creation through exposure alone and without explicit instruction. The current study is an example of a way in which an application of developmental theory and research can strengthen and enhance instruction in narrative composition. If we want our students to read and write with power and insight, we owe it to them to provide not just opportunity to write, but authentic, developmentally appropriate support as well.

To conclude, teaching trickster tales well is a step forwards in teaching children to be, like the trickster, Anansi in the African folk tale, capable of obtaining, sharing, and creating stories that form and frame their worlds. Teaching trickster tales is also about honouring not only the legacy of an especially lively variety of a vibrant cultural folklore, but supporting and celebrating the new narratives young human minds create.

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Scripts/Plots → Plots → Plots/Plights

The plot centres on a character whose goal is established and attained. OR a character attempts to achieve a goal but fails. OR story includes a non-integrated sequence of events involving a character with changing goals. Closure is attained as the main character either does or doesn't reach his/her goal.	• The plot involves complications or subplots centred on main character's attempts to achieve a goal (character can't get what s/he wants without trying hard). • At least one trick-like event is included. • Events are clearly sequenced but seem happenstance and/or implausible. • Some details may be confusing or seem tangential. • Insufficient context is provided to create tension. • Closure is attained, includes a consideration of justice, but may be abrupt. Common plot structures include: • Negative trickster tricks someone and is punished, tricked back or repents. • OR a good character uses a trick to outwit a bad guy. • OR a negative trickster strives to achieve a goal, and eventually succeeds.	• The plot involves a trickster who completes a series of stereotypical actions and easily fools others as s/he attempts to achieve a consistently prominent goal. • Story events seem deliberately planned to further story's primary purpose, providing a more cohesive feel. • Sufficient detail is provided to easily understand story events. Little confusion exists. • Closure is achieved but seems more contrived than life-like or natural, and includes consideration of justice. **Common plot structures include:** • Negative trickster who does several successful actions before being easily stopped or readily reforming. • Positive trickster who attempts several actions in opposition to a difficult opponent before being successful.	• The plot involves a trickster who is neither perfectly good nor bad, and who uses knowledge of the vulnerabilities of others in actions (tricks) that are imaginative, effective and described in detail. • Events sequences have a well-planned cohesive feel, creating tension, and/or manipulating readers' predictions. • Closure is attained in a more sophisticated way (ex. The negative character is stopped but not reformed, or s/he goes through a more believable reformation. The story may suggest that the situation is resolved temporarily but not permanently.) Common plot structures include: • Negative trickster, who may be humorous, bumbling or likable, is eventually outwitted by an opponent. • Positive trickster, whose own inadequacies may interfere with own success, eventually bests a challenging opponent.

Bonus + .5

Complications may be implied but are not described. OR a trickster character tries to achieve a goal in more than one attempt but never succeeds. OR more than one goal sequence is included, but these are not integrated.	• Appropriate and sufficient descriptive detail is included to easily follow one well-planned trick sequence. • OR a series of similar events that retain a circumstantial quality.	• The plot involves a trickster who performs a series of actions (tricks) at least two of which are qualitatively different, imaginative and effective, involving less easily manipulated character(s) in order to reach a goal. **Common plot structures include:** • Negative trickster who is initially repeatedly successful with tricks but is tricked in return.	• The plot revolves around two characters, each of whom shows life-like qualities and/or flaws. • Each character attempts to achieve particular goals in contrast with the other. • Closure in the story takes both positive and negative characters into account. **Common plot structures include:** • Two characters each with some life-like traits, attempt to outwit each other, with the more positive character eventually prevailing.
Level 2 (age 6)	**Level 3 (age 8)**	**Level 4 (age 10)**	**Level 5 (age 12)**

Scripted/Intentional → **Intentional** → **Intentional/Interpretive**

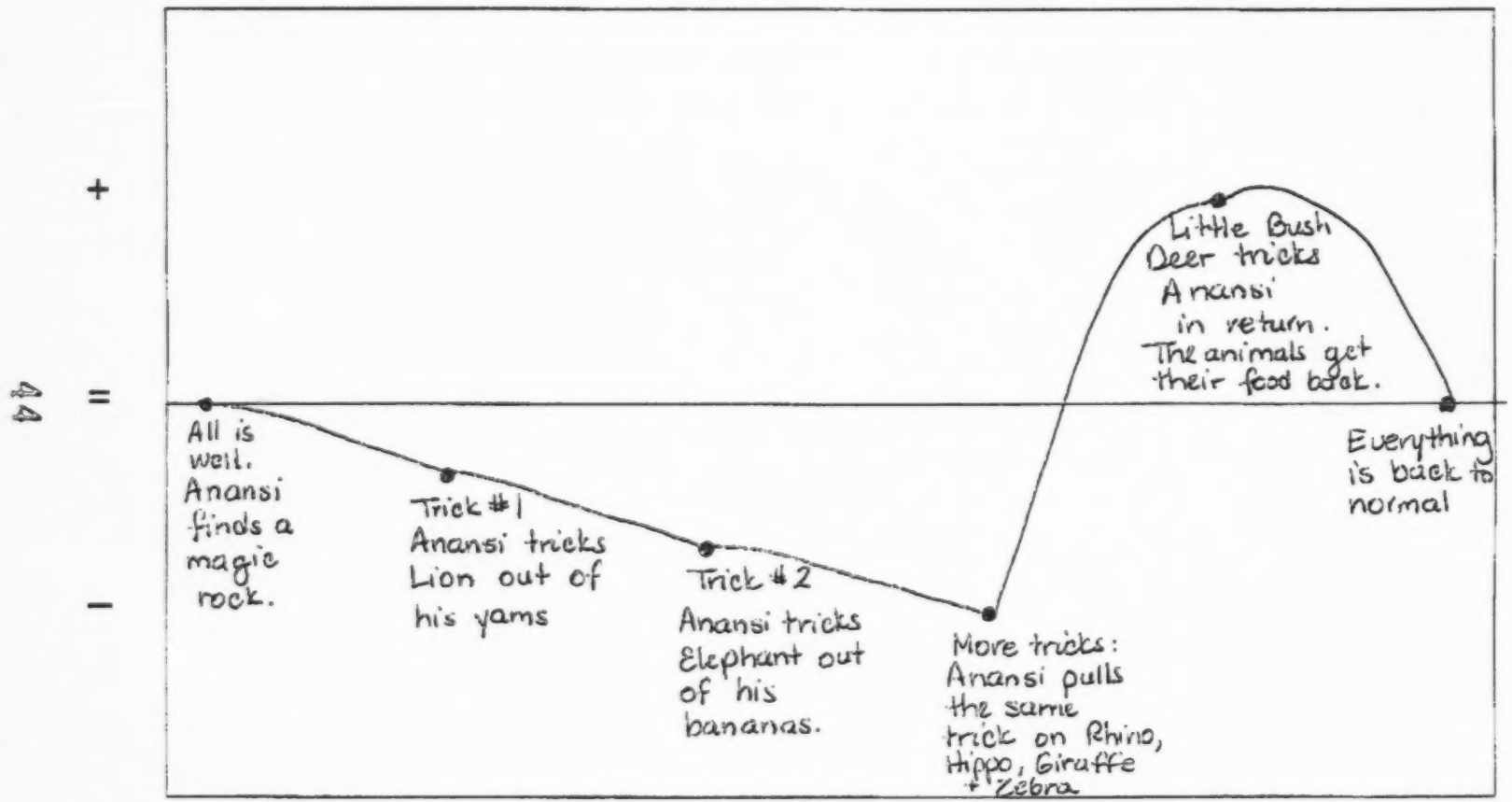
Only one character's perspective is included. Story may drift between first and third person. Actions taken towards a second character are not viewed from that character's perspective. Character's mental states may be described in simple terms (ex. He was mad. She made a plan). Characters may be described using basic categorical terms (ex. nice, mean). Character's goal is identified (something is lacking and there is an explicit or implied intention to get it).	• The perspective of a second character is mentioned. • Main characters' psychological traits are general but supported by action (ex. The "good" boy is shown to act in a good way). • Main character's inner world is not well developed. For ex. hidden motivations are included but must be inferred, and emotional responses may be stated but little detail is provided. • Physical qualities, if described, have little to do with plot. • Dialogue, if included, is action-oriented. • Character may be said to manipulate someone, though this might not involve pretence, and little if any detail may be given.	• The perspective of a second character is present, though not yet well developed (ex. may be unbelievably gullible). • Main character's mental inner world is made more consistent and coherent through use of supportive details. For ex. hidden motivations and feelings are clear; appearance and dialogue support interior traits. • Main character acknowledges the perspective of another character, and manipulates his/her perceptions, though this lacks detail and credibility. • Main character uses generic desires or fears in tricks (ex. desire for food, wealth, fame, desire to be helpful, fear of getting hurt). • Reasons may not be included to explain why tricks fail or succeed, or why characters hold certain motivations or beliefs. • Interior qualities are integral to plot.	• More details contribute to establishing a context such that characters' thoughts, actions, appearance, speech and emotional responses seem more life-like, consistent, cohesive and believable. • Main character uses beliefs or knowledge about another character's specific vulnerabilities to manipulate his/her perceptions. • A character may show some enduring qualities, even though this trait may have caused problems. (ex. the trickster may be foiled for now, but there is a suggestions that s/he may be back again for more tricks later). • Character may show contrasting traits (For ex. a negative trickster may be clever as well as ridiculous, a positive trickster may be smart but make errors in judgement. These discrepancies may be intentionally humorous. Alternately, a character may experience remorse or guilt and undergo a change of heart.) • Some explanation for motivations may be given.
Level 2 (age 6)	**Level 3 (age 8)**	**Level 4 (age 10)**	**Level 5 (age 12)**

Bonus + .5

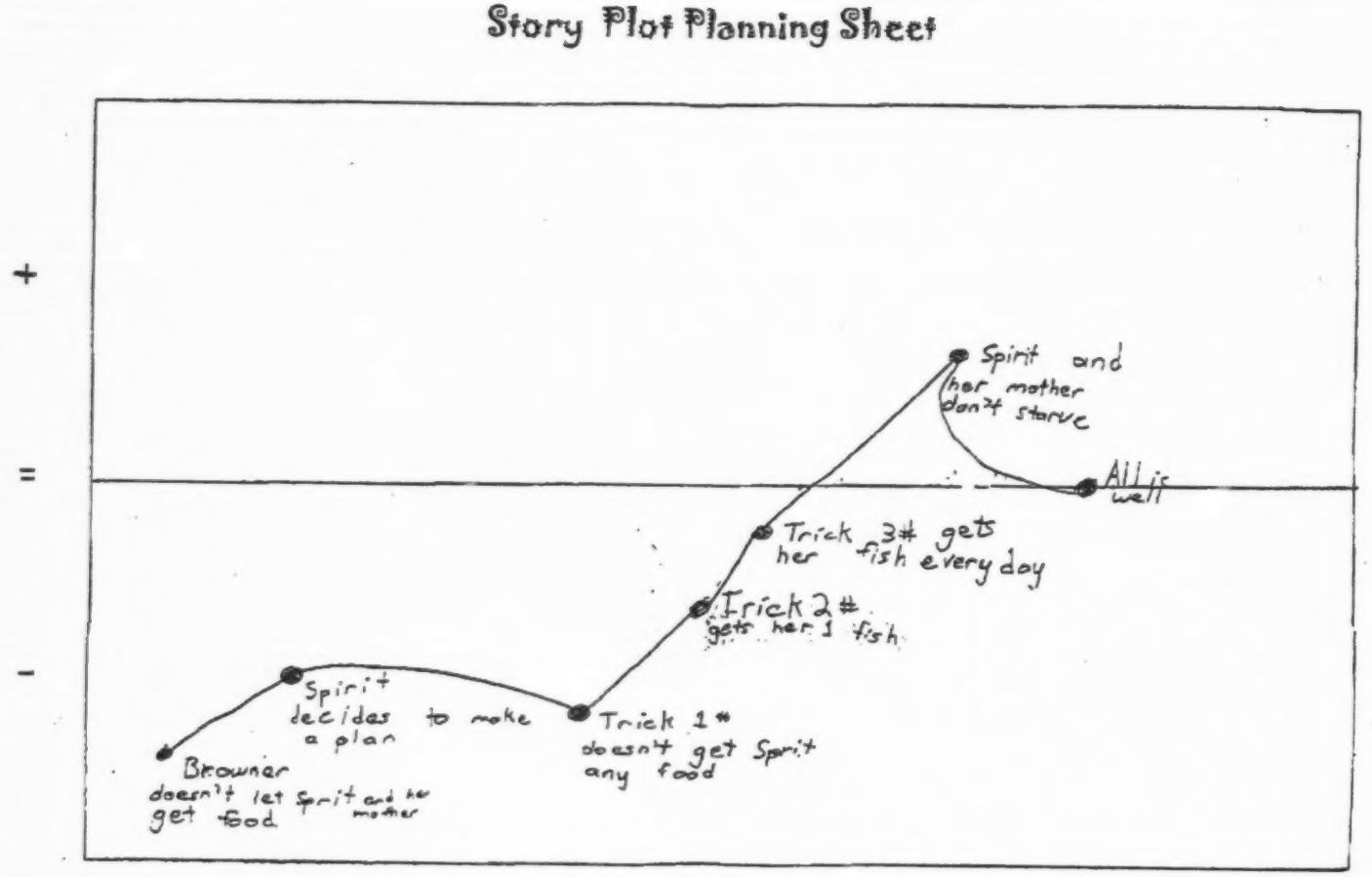
Perspective of second character may be mentioned. Character may have hidden motivations, but these are inconsistent or unclear and difficult to infer as detail is lacking.	• Characters emotional responses are included and are supported by actions and/or speech. • OR goals of at least two contrasting characters are explicitly identified.	• Mental states of at least two opposing characters are described in some detail. • OR goals of at least one character have a psychological orientation (ex. getting even, restoring justice). • Some of the characters' true thoughts and motivations are made explicit to the reader, but kept hidden from another character. • Reasons are included, whether described or implied, to explain why tricks are or are not successful.	• The perspective of a second character is made explicit and clear. • At least two lifelike characters are portrayed. • Both characters use knowledge of the other's vulnerabilities in manipulating the other's perceptions.
Level 2 (age 6)	**Level 3 (age 8)**	**Level 4 (age 10)**	**Level 5 (age 12)**

Story Plot Planning Sheet

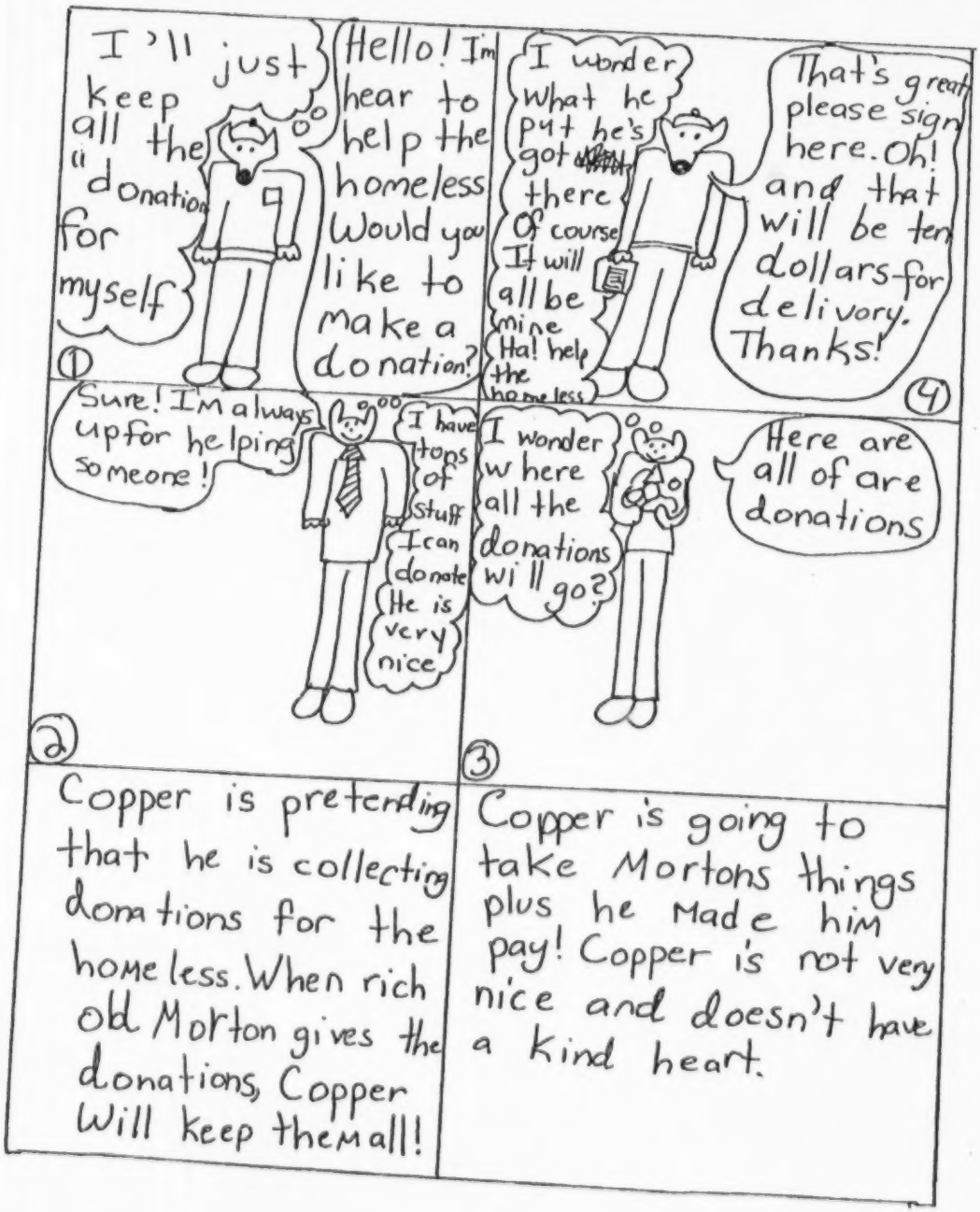
Anansi and the Moss Covered Rock (Eric Kimmel)


+
=
–
All is well. Anansi finds a magic rock.
Trick #1 Anansi tricks Lion out of his yams
Trick #2 Anansi tricks Elephant out of his bananas.
More tricks: Anansi pulls the same trick on Rhino, Hippo, Giraffe + Zebra
Little Bush Deer tricks Anansi in return. The animals get their food back.
Everything is back to normal

Appendix 1: Teacher model of story plot plan


Story Plot Planning Sheet
+
=
-
Spirit and her mother don't starve
All is well
Trick 3# gets her fish every day
Trick 2# gets her 1 fish
Spirit decides to make a plan
Trick 1# doesn't get Spirit any food
Browner doesn't let Spirit and her mother get food

Appendix 2: Student example of story plot planning


I'll just keep all the donations for myself
Hello! Im hear to help the homeless Would you like to make a donation?
1
I wonder what he put he's got there Of course It will all be mine Ha! help the homeless
That's great please sign here. Oh! and that will be ten dollars for delivory. Thanks!
4
Sure! I'm always upfor helping someone!
I have tops of stuff I can donate He is very nice
2
I wonder where all the donations will go?
Here are all of are donations
3
Copper is pretending that he is collecting donations for the homeless. When rich old Morton gives the donations, Copper Will keep them all!
Copper is going to take Mortons things plus he Made him pay! Copper is not very nice and doesn't have a kind heart.

Appendix 3: Student use of speech and thought bubbles n depicting a trick sequence

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Signature: MJarvey / Amckeough	Printed Name/Position/Title: Marya Jarvey / Anne McKeough
Organization/Address: Division of Applied Psychology University of Calgary 2500 University Dr NW Calgary Alberta CA T2N 1N4	Telephone: 403-220-6999 FAX: E-Mail Address: majarvey@ucalgary.ca Date: May 5/2003